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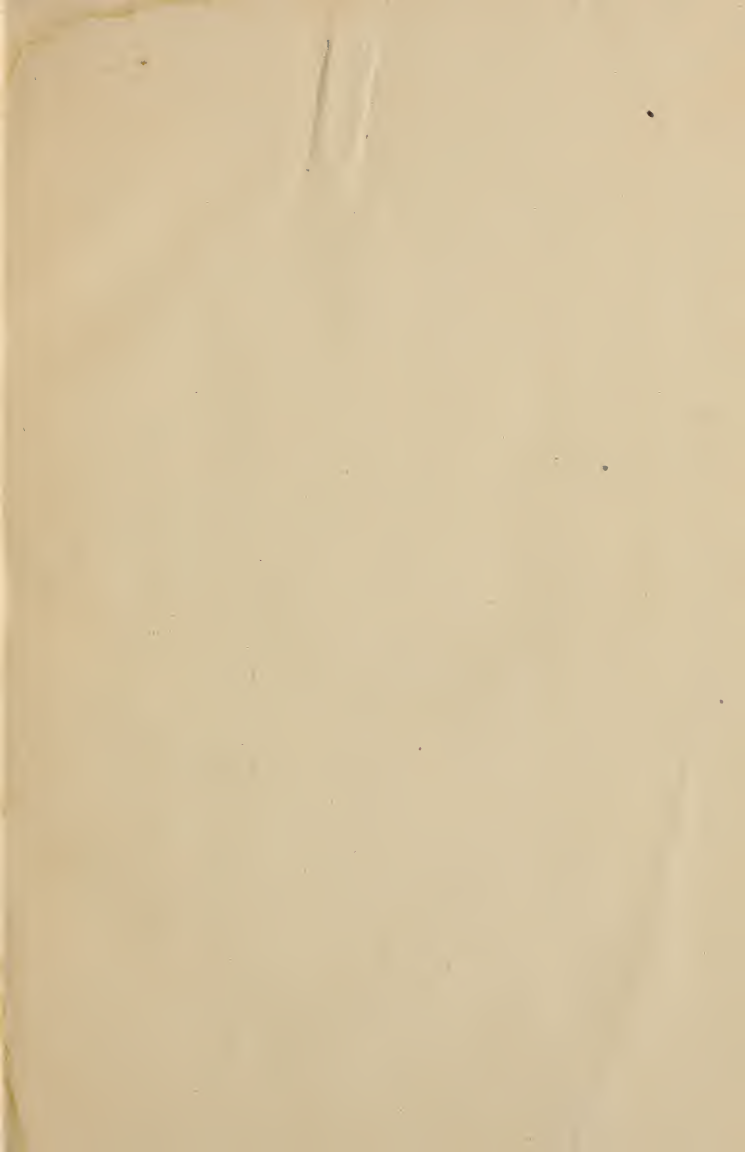
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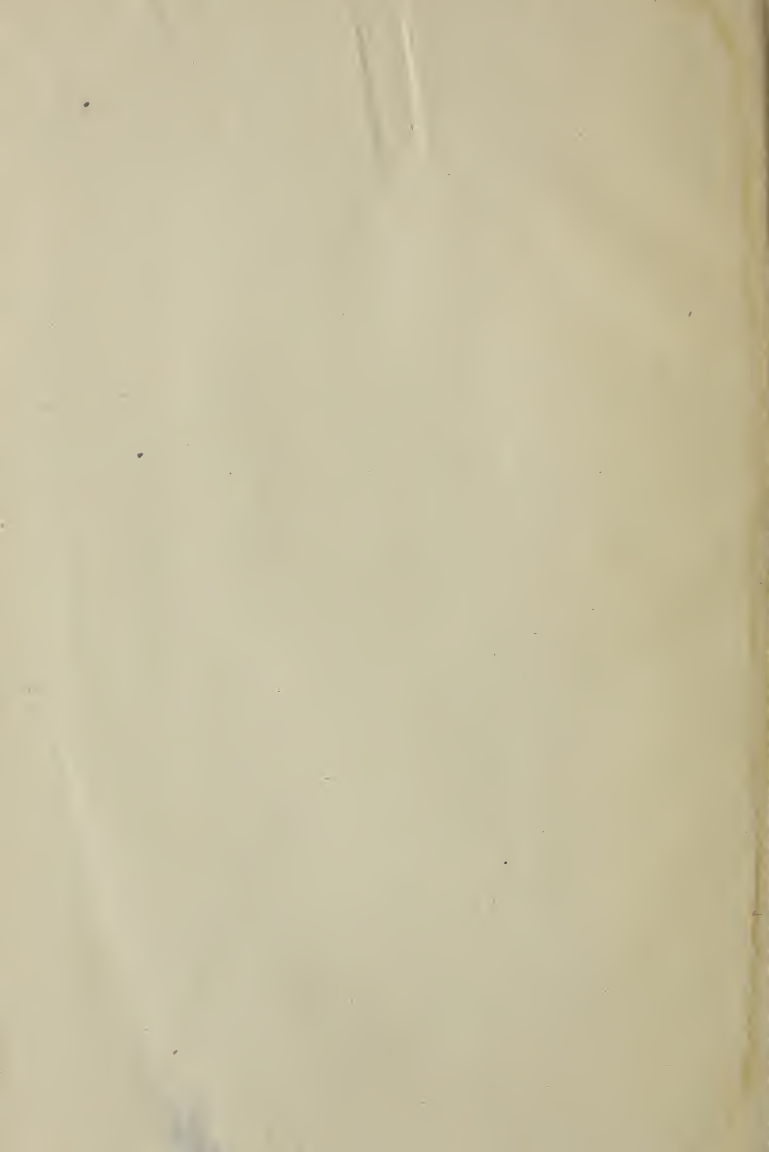




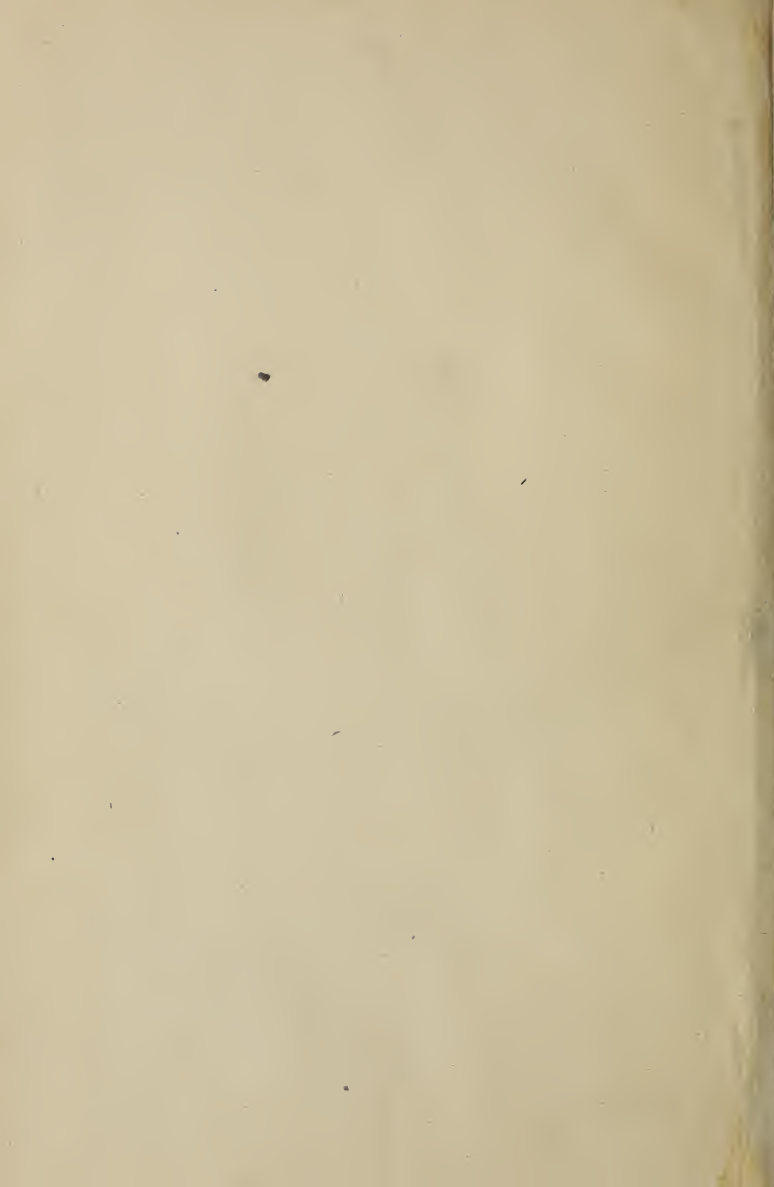
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AN ADDRESS

FROM THE

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Convention of American Women,

TO THE

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

ON THE

SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

*Anti-slavery convention of American  
" women. 3d. Philadelphia, 1839*

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## P R E F A C E

### TO THE ENGLISH REPRINT.

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THOSE who have travelled much in the United States of North America; and those particularly who have become acquainted with the Society of Friends there, cannot fail to have observed the prevalent indifference of that body to the cause of "Abolition;" and the exceedingly timid manner in which, in *some* instances, that Cause is approached; whilst that in *other* instances, conspicuous Abolitionists are spoken of in terms of disapprobation equally strong with those used towards Slaveholders. And if the Traveller has been brought into confidential intercourse with the *few* Friends in America who are avowed Abolitionists, he must often have heard a cry like "Come over and help us," addressed to their brethren and sisters in England, who have for so many years contended for the same object, and who have the consolation of believing that a blessing rests on their labours.

As a way of seconding that cry, this little work is reprinted and circulated amongst Friends in England, in the hope that their cheering and sustaining voice will, in some way or other, be effectually conveyed to the faithful but wearied advocates of the oppressed; who are now labouring in the United States, *under complicated and great discouragements.*

J. M.

Millbrook, near Southampton,  
3rd Month 30th, 1840.

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## ADDRESS.

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CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,—In the spirit of unaffected kindness and respect, we now utter a few of our thoughts for your serious consideration. You are well aware what a change has passed over public sentiment with regard to your Society, since the days of GEORGE FOX. That great champion of spiritual freedom says, "Prisons have been made my home, a great part of my time, and I have been in danger of my life, and in jeopardy daily." Gerard Croese, in his History of the Quakers, informs us that "All the rest of the world abhorred them and all their actions. Nay, inveighed against them with the most reviling expressions, spreading this report, that they were the veriest rogues of all men alive." But now the flattering change in popular opinion is embodied in a universal proverb; for the man who is uncommonly honest, and pre-eminently just, is said to give "Quaker measure."

Of the concealed dangers and insidious temptations that arise when "all men speak well of you," it is needless to remind you; for the reflecting observer must be painfully aware of their existence and their power. But we doubt whether you are equally aware of the general scrutiny to which your opinions and practice are now subjected. Men, in their present keen search after truth, are everywhere struck with the obvious fact that the early Friends were very far in advance of their age, in most of the great principles of love, truth, and freedom. Among all sects, doubts are now arising whether WAR, under any circumstances, is not a violation of Gospel precepts; and the History of the Quakers is earnestly

examined for instruction and encouragement. Those who perceive how the immortal spirit of WOMAN is fettered by unjust laws, and repressed by social usages, are carefully comparing the women of your Society with those of other denominations. The enemies of SLAVERY quote your early testimony as an example to other churches. The sincere friends of EQUALITY, struck with the Christian democracy of your principles, and the simplicity of your practice, eagerly inquire, "Does their love embrace the whole human race? Do they eat and drink with each other, without regard to rank or complexion? Is there no distinction in their meeting-houses? Or is there, as elsewhere, a corner provided for a despised class?" The conscientious clergyman earnestly asks whether the *unpaid ministry* of the Friends is more free and bold in the advocacy of unpopular truths, than the paid ministry of other sects?

Where is the light, toward which so many eyes are anxiously turning? Alas! it is burning dimly, like surrounding lights—half extinguished by the stifling vapour of the world!

To the believers in human progress—to the earnest friends of the whole brotherhood of man,—the Society of Friends are mainly interesting and instructive for what they have been. It has been eloquently said that "Truth can never die. If the form it once animated becomes dead, it has, like the soul of man, a glorious resurrection." Therefore, not in vain did GEORGE FOX so bravely struggle to throw from him the bondage of a selfish world and a formal church. Not in vain did the serene example of WILLIAM PENN shine forth, like a mild and solitary star, amid the dark storms of violence and hatred. The truths they embodied in word and deed have become an everlasting portion of man's spiritual wealth. If smothered by cowardice, or worldly wisdom, in one breast, they take refuge in another; and because no sect is found to represent them, they are re-appearing in new forms among individuals of all sects.

Why is it that these living examples are not abundantly more numerous among the professed followers of PENN, than among other denominations? Why was it that thousands upon thousands felt the power of your early testimony; and gentry, and nobles, yea, even princes, reverently yielded to its influence? And why is it that such fruits are not found as the result of your labour?

It is because such a thing as hereditary religion cannot be. The spiritual nobility, that builds itself upon a deceased ancestry, cannot have life in it. If we would reign with Jesus, we must ourselves follow him through the crucifixion. We must ourselves live in continual opposition to the spirit and maxims of a selfish world. The early Friends did this; therefore they were reviled and persecuted; and because they were thus lifted above the world, they had power to draw men unto them.

There was a time when, in most European languages, it was deemed an insult to say *thou* to a superior, or even to an equal in rank; and the use of that simple word involved inconvenience and danger, because it became, for the time, the representative of the great principle of human equality. But that interpretation has long since passed away from the English language, and you incur neither hazard nor disgrace by retaining this form of speech. Neither are you now in danger of being sent to prison for wearing a hat in presence of Duke or Governor. Indeed, the constancy and passive courage of early Friends so far remoulded governments and society, that all their peculiar practices may now be followed without perilling life or liberty, and almost without incurring reproach.

As society moves onward in its slow progress toward perfection, the same principles must be continually applied to new forms of opposition. The Cross will always be in our path; and whosoever takes it up humbly and earnestly, and bears it bravely in the face of a scoffing world, will find that it never loses its wonderfully life-giving power. The seventeenth century had crosses peculiarly

its own; and they who bore them wear the crown. The nineteenth calls for similar strong and enduring spirits to bear its appropriate burdens; and now, as then, "No Cross no Crown." If Christians would regenerate their own age, they must vigorously oppose the peculiar errors and vices, the passions and the prejudices of that age.

Seriously and affectionately, we would appeal to your own consciences, whether the Friends, as a Society, are now faithfully performing this duty. While the Lord is evidently doing a great work in the world, and portions of all nations and sects are zealously labouring to "prepare for him a highway in the desert," the voice of your Society is heard exclaiming, "Israel shall dwell alone!" "Mingle not with the excitements of the world!"

Why so much afraid of excitements? Shall we hesitate to follow Jesus, because he has told us that he came "not to send peace upon earth, but a sword?" GEORGE FOX never shunned declaring the whole counsel of God, because it produced excitement. Scarcely Paul himself occasioned a greater uproar, or was more loudly accused of turning the world upside down. And if some *women*, now engaged in the cause of the oppressed, are called "shameless disturbers of the peace," let it not be forgotten that Mary Dyer was persecuted, even unto death, upon the same charge.

We are well aware that the early opinions of your Society, with regard to slavery, have never been retracted; nor are we unmindful of your numerous acts of benevolence toward the coloured race. These claims upon our respect are most cordially acknowledged. But, with that plainness of speech which you so much approve, allow us to ask what your Society is doing in the present tremendous struggle between justice and oppression, humanity and violence? Do you mostly expend your energies in reproving those who uphold a wicked system, or those who with honest zeal are striving to overthrow it? Do you encourage and sustain those

of your own members who feel called to this arduous work? Or do you multiply obstacles in their path, thus inducing them to labour with other sects, or violate their own consciences? Is the pride of caste less strong in you than in others? It is true you are not slaveholders, and continue to believe no Christian should be implicated in a system so unrighteous. That work your fathers did for you long ago. But what are *you* doing to prove your hearty abhorrence of slavery? We should all agree what to think of a man, who, in the time of your early persecutions, claimed to be called a Friend, because he believed oaths and war were sinful, yet preferred, for the sake of quiet, to remain silent concerning those evils, or to employ himself in pointing out the errors and imperfections of those who were bearing an honest testimony against them.

You have sometimes urged that you could not unite with abolitionists, because you deemed them rash and intolerant. Among the great variety of temperaments and characters engaged in the anti-slavery cause, there must unavoidably be some foundation for a charge like this; though candid minds, in view of the difficulties by which these reformers are surrounded, will marvel that their mistakes have been so few, and their errors so unimportant. But admitting the accusation to be true to a very great extent, we do not see how this can absolve you from working earnestly in *some* way, of your own choosing. If they are harsh and headstrong, so much the more need of your mild and peaceful spirit.

The fiat of the Almighty has gone forth that slavery shall cease to pollute the earth. The giant task must be accomplished; though the "wise and the prudent" of this world will, to the last, avoid all participation in it.

Be not sleeping in your tents in an hour like this! By the pure light of your early testimony—for the sake of your own vitality and influence as a society—in the name of the suffering and de-

graded slave, and of the deluded and corrupted master—we beseech you come up to this work with earnest hearts, and help us to do it wisely and speedily.

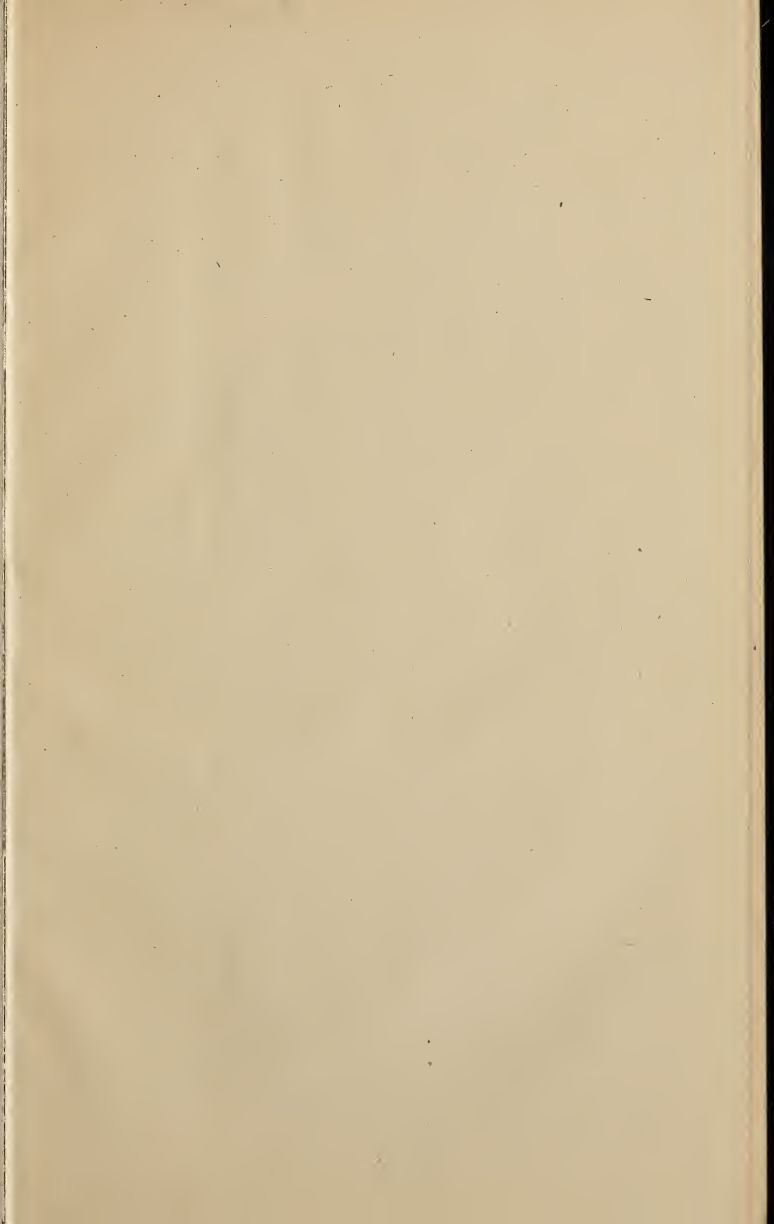
In behalf of the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women, assembled in Philadelphia.

SARAH LEWIS, *President.*

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| MARTHA V. BALL,<br>SARAH G. BUFFUM,<br>ANNA M. HOPPER,<br>MARY GREW, | } | <i>Secretaries.</i> |
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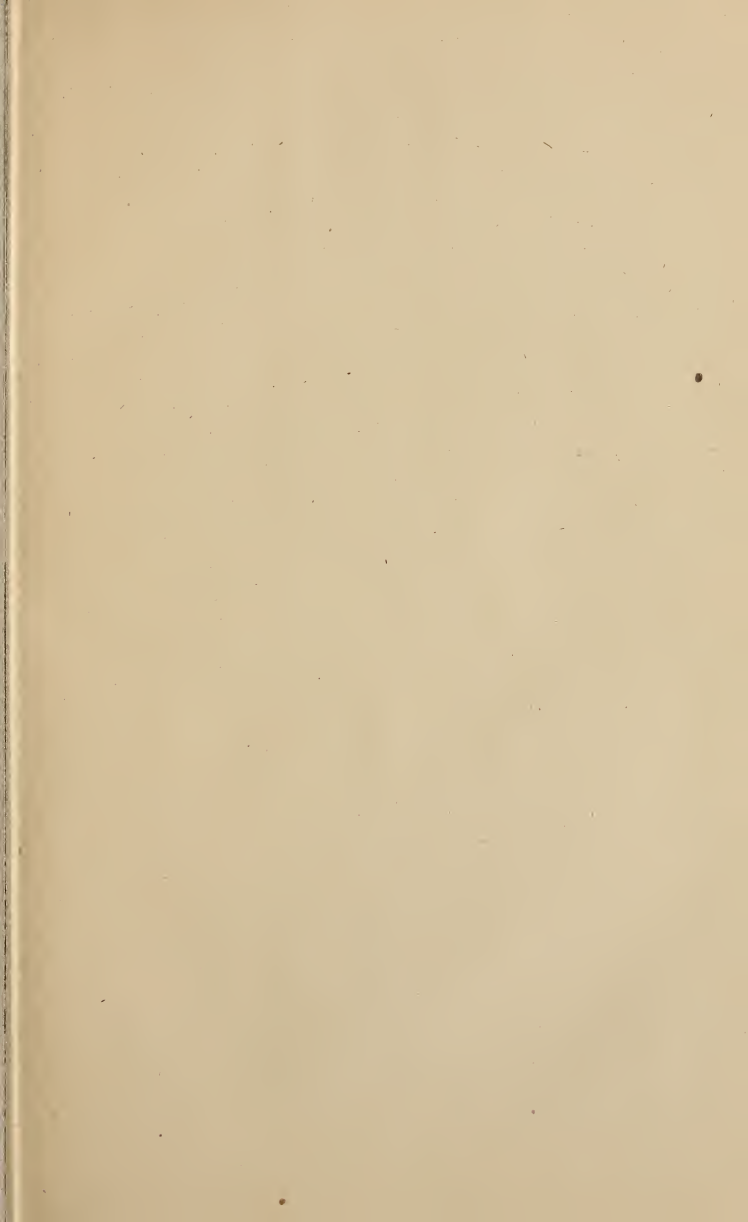


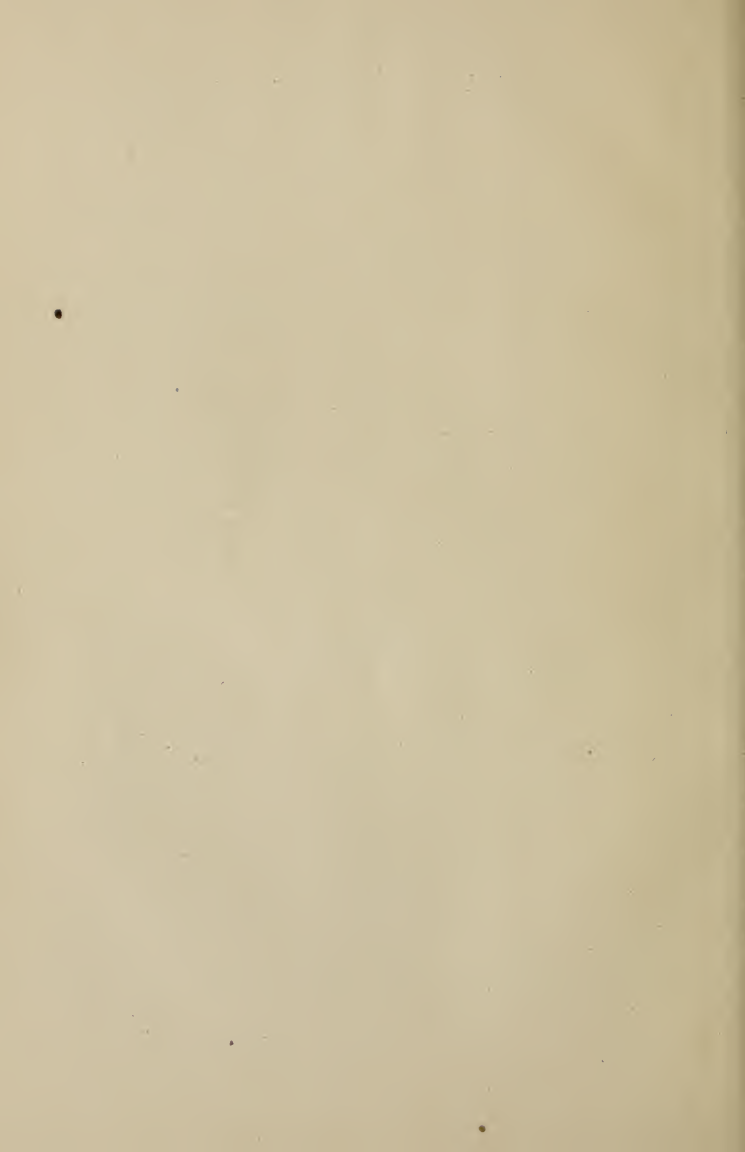


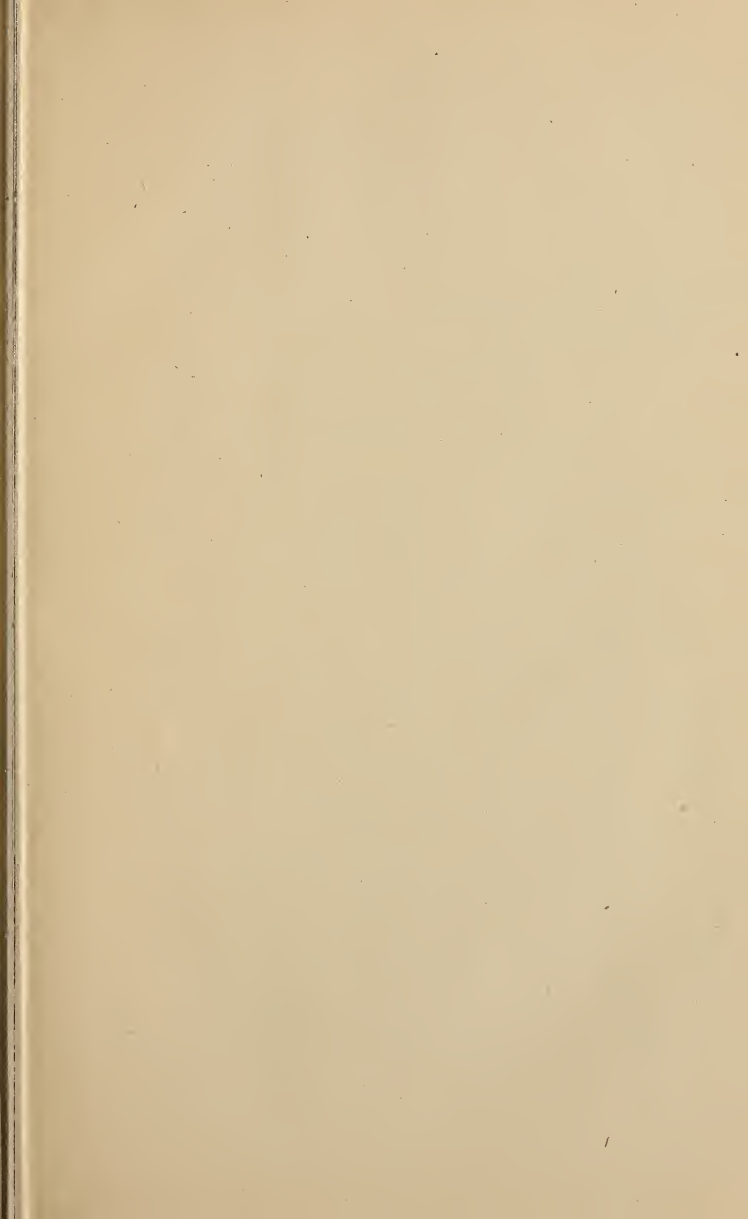




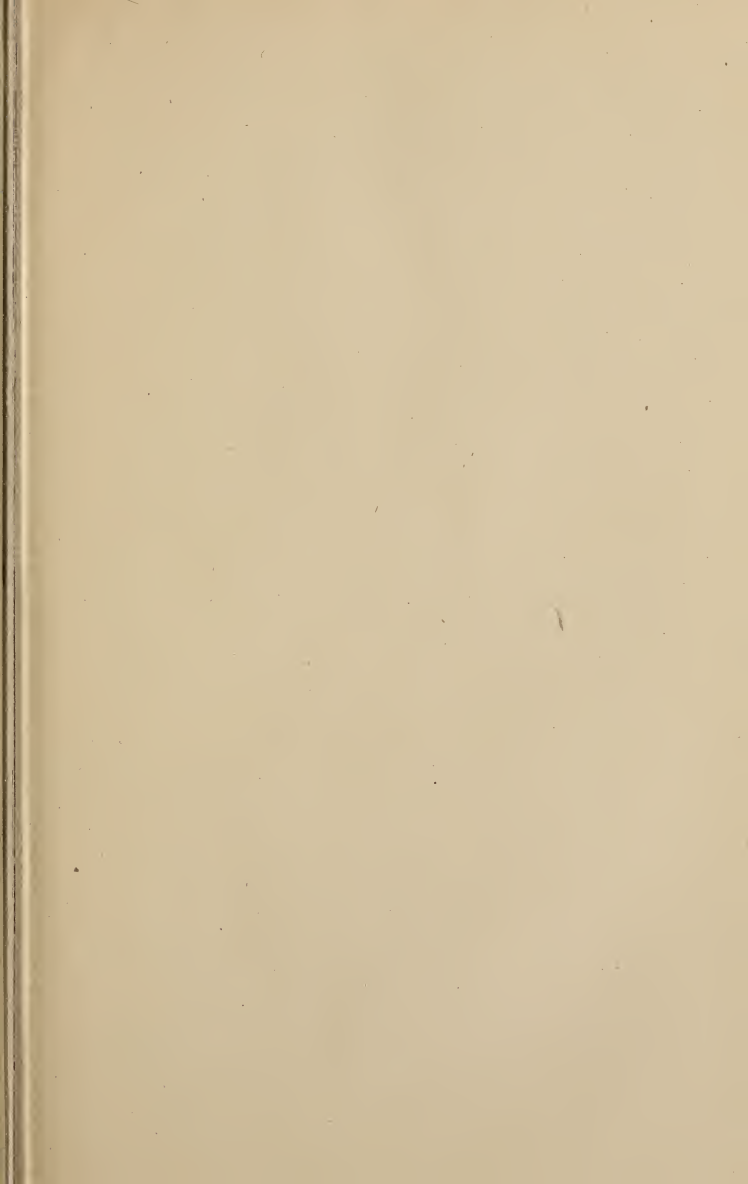




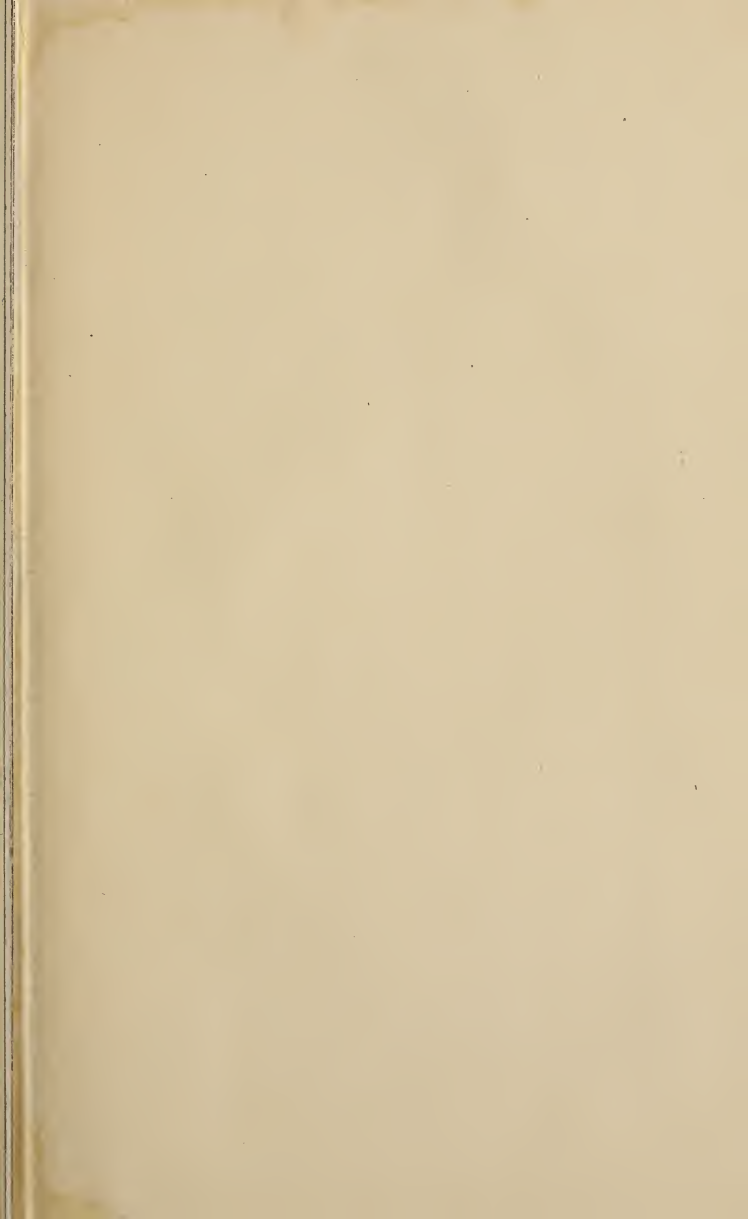


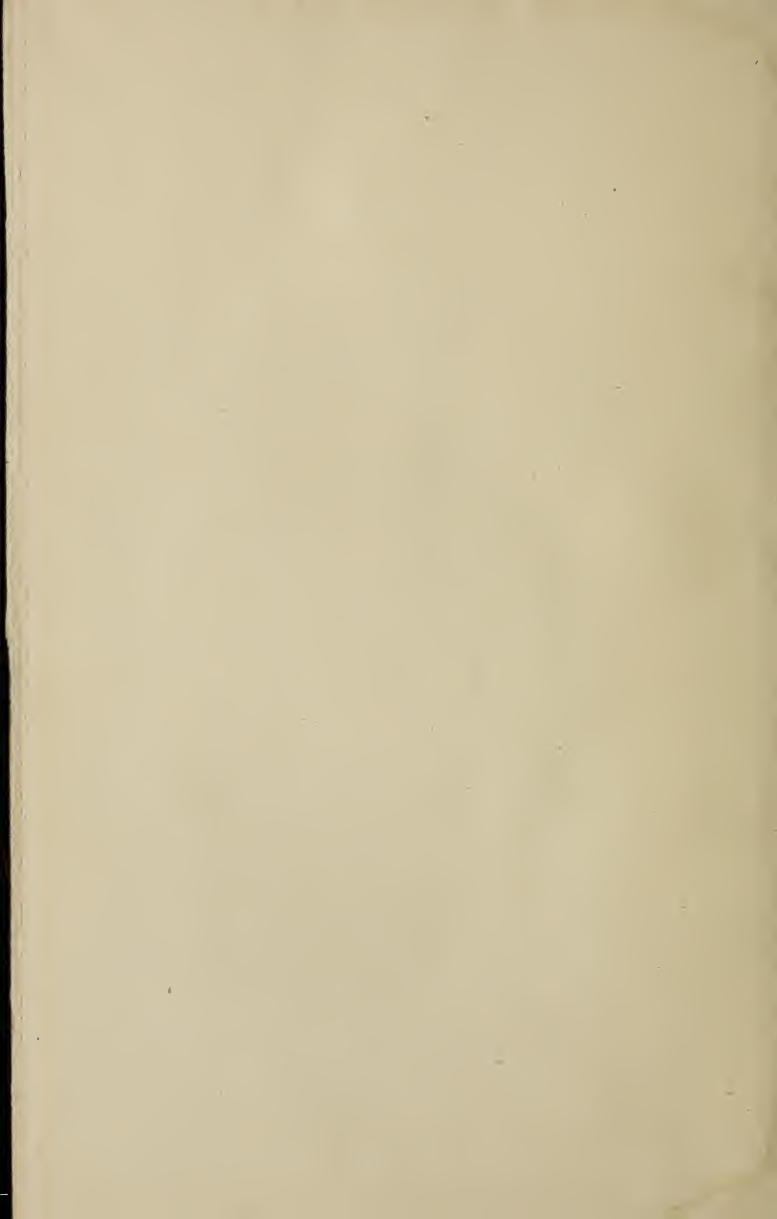




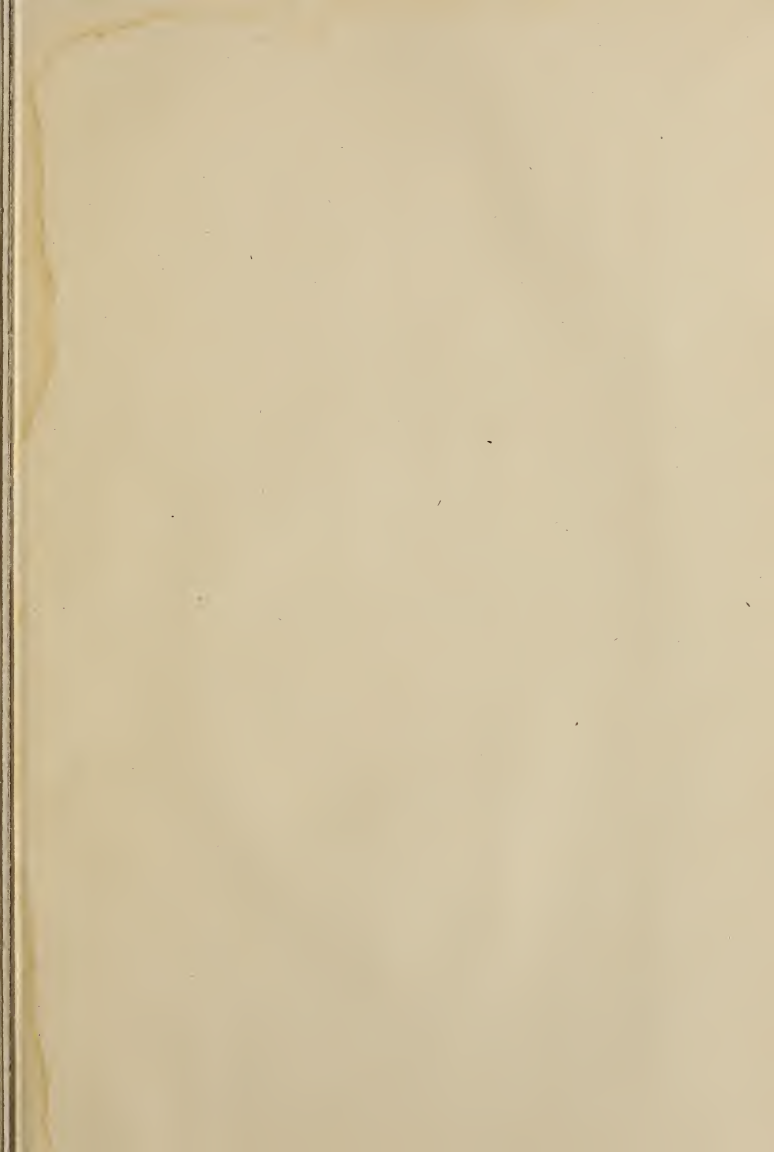




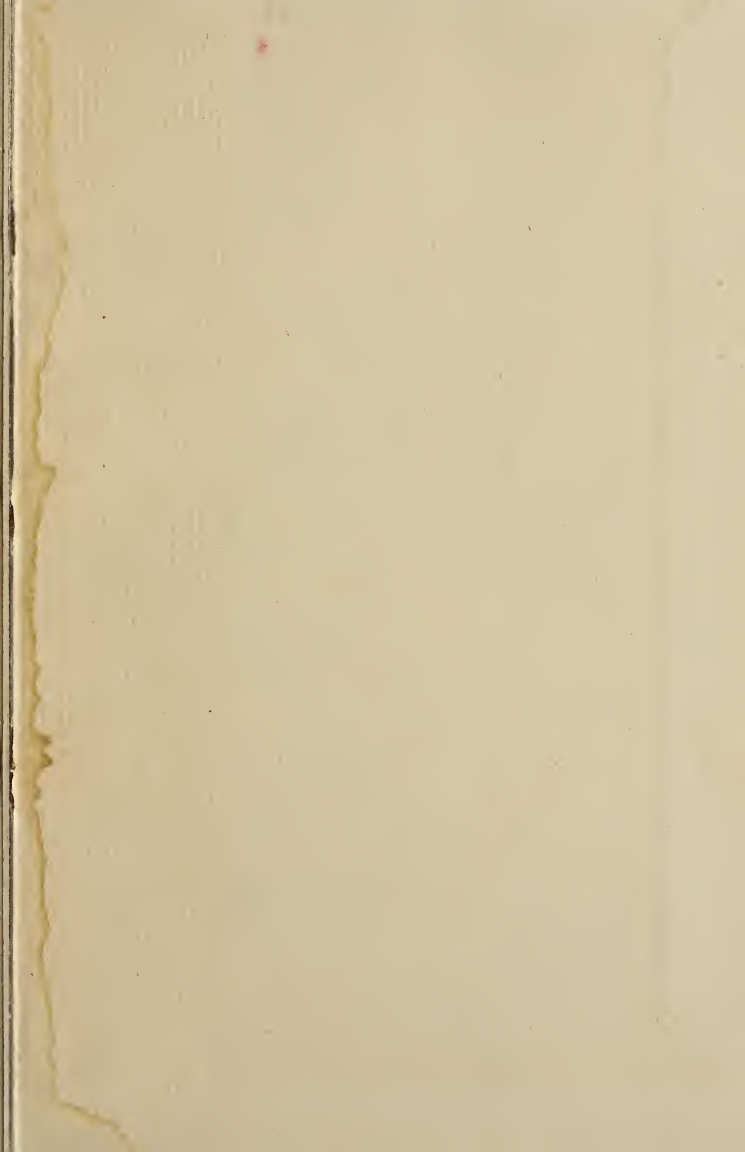












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